



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

TWO ALIEN SMUGGLERS SENTENCED TO A YEAR IN PRISON

Mexican smugglers pleaded guilty following wreck of van with 14 illegal aliens

INDIANAPOLIS—Two illegal aliens from Mexico were sentenced yesterday for alien smuggling following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that began when a van packed with 14 illegal aliens flipped over on I-70 here.

Ramon Vasquez-Balcasar, 22, and Rogelio Morales-Martinez, 24, were each sentenced to 12 months in prison Tuesday by U.S. District Sarah E. Barker after both pleaded guilty to transporting illegal aliens.

Balcasar was driving a van that overturned on I-70 near Brazil, Ind., Sept. 9. The van was rated to hold seven people, but actually contained 14 illegal aliens, including Balcasar and Martinez. Balcasar stated that the hood flew open and he lost control while attempting to pass a semi-truck when the accident occurred. The van ended up on the side of the road with some passengers being ejected from the vehicle. Injuries to the aliens included: a broken ankle, a broken nose, a concussion, and severe lacerations to the face and shoulder of a woman.

When law enforcement responded, they noticed the overturned van and three people along the side of the road. They followed the trail of blood into a nearby cornfield and located 11 more people.

The aliens began their trip from a house located near Phoenix, Ariz. Each alien had paid money to get into the United States and was supposed to pay more money to Balcasar and Martinez upon reaching their destinations, which included: South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Tennessee and Florida. The 12 smuggled aliens have been ordered deported by an immigration judge in Chicago.

After they complete their sentences, Balcasar and Martinez will be turned over to ICE to be deported. Balcasar and Martinez are also required to pay \$30,636 in restitution to the hospitals that treated the injured aliens.

“We are pleased with these sentences,” said Michelle Mangold, ICE Indianapolis resident agent-in-charge. “Two individuals who sought to profit illegally from the smuggling trade have been brought to justice. Together with our law enforcement partners, ICE remains committed to disrupting the smuggling trade and holding smugglers accountable for their illegal acts, no matter where they operate.”

The Indiana State Police and the Putnam County Sheriff’s Department also assisted in the investigation.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.